

REMARKS

I. Claim Status

Claims 1-2, 7-22, 27-71, 74-76, 79-105, 110-114, 120-124, and 144 were canceled by prior amendment. Claims 4-6, 23-25, 78, 107-109, 116-118, and 126 are canceled in the present amendment without prejudice to further prosecution in one or more continuation or divisional applications. Claims 26 and 119 have been amended to correct their claim dependencies and antecedent basis after cancellation of claims 24 and 117, respectively. No new matter has been introduced by the subject amendments. Claims 3, 26, 72, 73, 77, 106, 115, 119, 125 and 127-143 are thus pending. All of the pending claims read on the elected species.

II. Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants' attorney wishes to thank the examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter with respect to claims 3, 26, 72, 73, 77, 106, 115, 119, 125, and 127-143. In view of the discussion below, Applicants believe that the application is in condition for allowance.

III. Outstanding Rejections

Claims 78 and 126 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being allegedly anticipated by Stemmer et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,500,617). Claims 4-6, 23-25, 78, 107-109, 116-118, and 126 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being allegedly unpatentable over Stemmer et al. (U.S. Pat. No. 6,500,617), in view of Favretto et al.

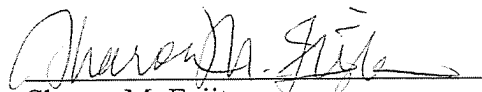
Applicants respectfully disagree with the prior art rejections because these claims contain all of the limitations of claims that have been determined by the Office to be free of the prior art. Nonetheless, in an effort to expedite the issuance of a Notice of Allowance, claims 4-6, 23-25, 78, 107-109, 116-118, and 126 have been canceled without prejudice to further prosecution in one or more continuation or divisional applications. Therefore, the outstanding rejections are now moot.

CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing, a Notice of Allowance on the pending claims is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner believe that a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of this application, the undersigned can be reached at the telephone number set forth below. The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any deficiency in fees or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-0990.

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